
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 18, 2006
Website: www.mbda.gov

Contact: Tambra Stevenson
Phone: (202) 482-6274
Email: tstevenson@mbda.gov

**MBDA National Director Hails the Economic
Empowerment Legacy of Booker T. Washington**
*Keynote speaker at the 76th Annual Booker T. Washington Business
Association Awards Banquet on October 19 in Detroit, MI*

DETROIT, MI—In capturing the spirit of Booker T. Washington, the Minority Business Development Agency's National Director, Ronald N. Langston, will address economic independence through entrepreneurship to nearly 600 business and community leaders at the 76th Annual Anniversary of the Booker T. Washington Business Association on Thursday, October 19, 2006 in Detroit, Michigan.

"In 1900, Booker T. Washington founded the National Negro Business League to help black men and women who had already achieved success in business, to become even more effective entrepreneurs," said Mr. Langston. "Like Washington, MBDA is focused on strategically growing and expanding established minority entrepreneurs."

One of MBDA's newest initiatives to support minority businesses, the Business to Business Linkage Forums connects minority businesses with each other to partner and go after public and private contract opportunities. In addition, MBDA offers the Phoenix Opportunity Matching Program, a free database for U.S. minority-owned businesses to find business partners and contract opportunities.

"As we move into the global economy, minority businesses should explore international business and trade opportunities. In particular, I would like to see more African American businesses leverage the benefits of the Africa Growth Opportunities Act that was signed into law by President Bush on May 18, 2000 to build more US-Africa business partnerships resulting in built economies and free markets."

"Minority business enterprises are economic engines for their communities and play a vital role in keeping the United States economically competitive in the global economy," said Ronald N. Langston, National Director, Minority Business Development Agency, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"The number of African American-owned businesses has grown by 45 percent since 1997. In the United States, African Americans owned over 1.2 million firms employing more than 756,000 people with annual revenues grew exceeding \$89 billion based on the U.S. Census' 2002 Survey of Business Owners."

With this year's theme, "Standing on the Shoulders of Pioneer Entrepreneurs: Building Stronger Business for Tomorrow," the National Director will address economic empowerment and access

to new market opportunities as well as developing strategies to grow African American businesses at the awards event at 7 p.m. at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center. At the awards banquet, attendees will gather to pay tribute to minority entrepreneurs, partners and advocates who have had a significant and valuable impact upon the continued growth and development of local small and minority businesses.

-30-

About the Minority Business Development Agency, US Department of Commerce

Founded in 1971 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in this Nation. The Agency actively promotes the growth and competitiveness of large, medium and small minority business enterprises by offering management and technical assistance through a network of forty local business centers throughout the United States.